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[Oxford, Ohio]

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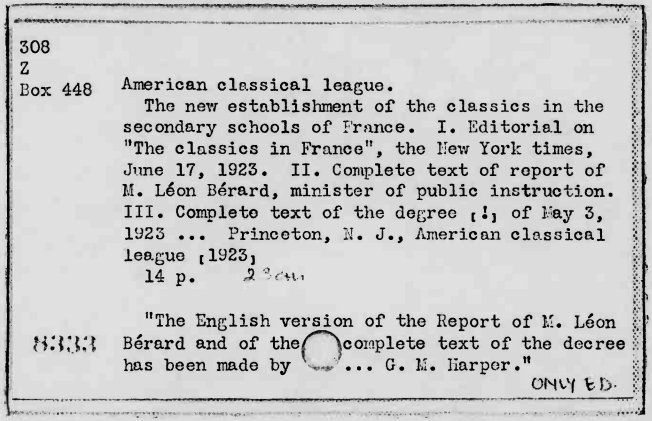

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THE NEW ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CLASSICS IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF FRANCE

I. EDITORIAL ON "THE CLASSICS IN FRANCE," THE NEW YORK TIMES, JUNE 17, 1923.

II. COMPLETE TEXT OF REPORT OF M. LÉON BÉRARD, MINISTER OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION.

III. COMPLETE TEXT OF THE DEGREE OF MAY 3, 1923.

[NOTE. The English version of the Report of M. Léon Bérard and of the complete text of the Decree has been made by Professor G. M. Harper of Princeton University.]

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PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN CLASSICAL LEAGUE
Single copies, 10 cents; 20 copies for $1.00; 50 copies for $2.00.
Apply to ANDREW F. WEST, *Princeton, New Jersey*

I. Editorial on "The Classics in France" *The New York Times*, June 17, 1923.

THE CLASSICS IN FRANCE

AFTER twenty years of experiment in the other direction, France has definitely restored and enlarged the classics in the lycées, or secondary schools, as an essential part of a liberal education. This action has been taken after prolonged public discussion and with full consideration of what has been actually happening in the schools. As M. Léon Bérard, the Minister of Public Instruction, observes in his letter to President Millerand: "Experience and not "theory is what counts in this case. It is experience that shows the "defects in a plan of studies. Those disciplines which it has tested "and approved are the surest, even though they be the oldest."

Three schools are open to French children on passing from the primary stage. In two of these, the advanced primary school and the technical school, full provision is made for "practical" education. In the third, the lycée, the one aim is the best general education. Here, if anywhere, the finer intellectual and moral training should be found. France solves the problem by constructing with simplicity and coherence each of the three types in full accordance with its own needs, and solely with the aim of securing the best attainable education of each kind. The new plan goes into effect this Autumn.

The lycée has seven years, divided into two stages of four and three years, respectively. In the first four years a single common foundation is laid for all. It is to consist of the classical and modern languages, well placed in relation to each other, mathematics and the natural sciences, geography, history and French. Four years of Latin and two of Greek are to be required of all. The second stage includes the succeeding three years. Here the pupil has a choice between the classical and modern language courses. If he takes the classical side, he keeps up Latin and Greek to the end.[1] If he takes the modern language side, he has a full study of French and also has two other modern languages. Mathematics and the sciences have their place on both sides.

Thus while providing amply for all who seek "practical" education, France also resolutely determines to save her liberal education by making it definite, pure and strong. In rebuilding the devastated regions she does not forget the deeper needs of her youth. When the present abundant talk about the coming reconstruction of our own secondary schools begins to issue in positive action, this act of France will be a powerful help to our foundation studies, notably to the classics. And as the movement gains power it may prove strong enough to sweep aside the lesser things and to base all our liberal studies, in school and in college, on a foundation strong enough to support safely the whole superstructure.

[1]Correction: Latin must be kept up to the end, but the continuance of Greek is elective.

II. MINISTRY OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION AND OF THE FINE ARTS
REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

Paris, May 3, 1923

MR. PRESIDENT:

I have the honor to submit for your approval a proposal for a decree concerning the new plan of studies in the secondary schools.

Long experience has proved that every school system requires to be reformed from time to time. Practice reveals weak spots, disappointing the most praiseworthy intentions and overthrowing the most ingenious theories. Reformers should never lose sight of this fact and should adapt their pedagogical plans to the needs of the age and the movement of life. They should also be on their guard against the effect of preconceived ideas, the most disastrous of which is the notion that provision for intellectual culture should be made subordinate to material progress or economic demands. This provision, in fact, should not vary with the outer aspect of the world and the circumstances of physical existence, if it is really true, as we generally think, that mental development will never be identified with the mere accumulation of encyclopaedic knowledge. Experience and not theory is what counts in this case. It is experience that shows the defects in a plan of studies. Those disciplines which it has tested and approved are the surest, even though they be the oldest. Such has been, broadly speaking, my position in preparing the proposal which I have the honor to submit to you.

Furthermore, when I considered the peculiar needs of the present time, my duty appeared even more sharply defined; for, in proportion as French culture tends, as it does today, to rekindle its beams and cast them afar, we must bring fuel to the fire. But even before the war, doubts had risen in regard to the proper fitness of our secondary education to supply the essential and traditional qualities of our culture; the need of reform was already manifest, and the searching of hearts that followed the catastrophe has made it only more evident.

Considering these circumstances and the mass of testimony

which has been collected before and during the consultations I have had, after a debate last year which was creditable to the whole Parliament, the conviction has been unanimously reached that the present scheme and programmes of secondary instruction ought to be thoroughly revised. I have devoted myself to this revision, sometimes yielding in matters of detail my own personal preferences in order to build upon definite facts and find the active remedies immediately required to check the breakdown of our education.

Out of the hot, far-reaching discussion which raged over the general question of reform, one essential idea has gradually emerged, namely, that an equilibrium must be established between scientific instruction and literary culture, whether classical or modern. This was the subject of my particular concern, in an undertaking whose general features appealed to everyone.

Considerations of another sort reinforced our desire to raise the level of studies: we wished to make it possible for all deserving youths to profit by the best and most harmonious training, by establishing a system of methodical selection, without regard to wealth or social standing. I have devoted myself to carrying out this task of democratic justice also.

Anyone who looks over the history of our secondary-school programmes in the nineteenth century will observe in them a continual effort to co-ordinate the teaching of the humanities with the teaching of modern languages and the various sciences. But he will notice also, in this evolution, a desire to create a distinct type of educational system, freed from the classical disciplines and designed especially to fit young people for the requirements of modern economic life. Those who were, one after another, the advocates of this idea did not attempt to conceal its utilitarian character; but its partisans today are claiming, in the face of all experience, that this practical training can be set up as a means of general culture.

Now, the development of advanced primary instruction and of technical instruction, which have been a creation of the Third Republic, has altered the fundamental assumptions of the problem of national education and obliges us to adopt a different point of view from that occupied by the reformers who preceded us. We are obliged, in short, to take account of the share in our general educational system which every one of these three systems holds if we wish to change the status of any one of them. Consequently, certain arrangements which might have seemed reasonable enough, even in 1902, can no longer be maintained without duplications of work

which would be both useless and burdensome: the section without Latin in the lower classes, so similar to the general section of the advanced primary schools, furnishes a plain illustration of this now.

Today, on passing from the primary school, three paths are open to children: the technical school, the advanced primary school and the secondary school.

The aim of the first of these is to prepare for direct entrance into an industrial, agricultural or even an artistic career (by giving them the necessary dexterity) young men who desire to become, at an early age, those trained specialists who are so often needed and are not to be found. The advanced primary school has now acquired good pedagogical qualities and can give its pupils a solid education which fits them to fill immediately various positions as primary-school teachers or in public administration or private business. The social and economic importance of this achievement no longer needs to be pointed out.

These two systems constitute what can henceforth be called practical education of the second stage, in which the number of years of schooling is not more than four or five. In proportion as these two systems come to be co-ordinated and in proportion as their special mission is clearly marked, the peculiar function of the third or secondary-school system will be more clearly perceived: namely, by the slow action of a prolonged and disinterested course of study to form young men who, no matter what may be the special lines which they pursue later, will be distinguished by their eminent aptitude for taking an interest in the divers creations of the mind as well as of the industry of man, and for adapting themselves to these creations.

Since in 1902 the advanced primary school and the technical school had not yet reached the development they have since attained, certain arrangements made at that time corresponded to intentions which no longer exist; so that today a modern-language secondary schooling of six years is neither economical nor necessary. Furthermore, the results sought by the authors of the last programmes of studies were only seldom obtained. In the generality of cases they did not establish a well-balanced plan of studies and, what was worse, they allowed a kind of schooling whose original object was to prepare boys for practical careers to be raised to the level of the classical section, an error which is opposed to every true conception of culture. I may add that a system of early elective choices and of splitting up the classes of the middle years into four parallel sections produced the grave defect of

breaking the continuity of studies and causing the pupils to choose their studies before they were mature enough to do so properly and then to indulge in excessive specialization. In this way adolescents were deprived of an opportunity, the only one many of them would ever have, of acquiring those general views for the lack of which a man becomes unfit to get above his work. To fall into these errors was to forget that the object of secondary-school training is to introduce the mind to fruitful methods rather than to burden it with many kinds of knowledge, and to do this within the limits of an option quite narrowly limited.

Taking all these things into consideration, it seemed necessary to remake the programmes of study, which were overloaded and even contained parallel courses in the same subjects. We felt the need of introducing a logical progression. Since the simplicity and coherence of a plan of studies contribute powerfully to its efficacy, I deemed it necessary also to establish in the early years of the secondary school a uniform course of study for all the pupils. In the opinion of the teachers most competent in such matters, a complete scientific culture can be obtained only at a later stage of intellectual development. On the other hand the study of living languages enriches the mind only if it already possesses a strong literary framework. Finally, our language itself and our literature, rooted as they are in the soil of antiquity, cannot be thoroughly studied without a preliminary initiation into the classics. Testimony of this kind indicated the main features of the reform of which I shall now give you a precise outline.

The cause of Latin and Greek has probably been injured by certain arguments which have sometimes been used in its defence. The noble purpose of these disciplines, their peculiar virtue, is not that they impart to the mind a certain combination of elegance and superficial charm. Their value is that they confer solidity and moderation of judgment, for a humanistic education tends characteristically to favor the development of an analytical spirit and of vigorous, precise and clear reasoning powers. Therefore, by giving more scope for the classical tradition in secondary instruction, though without returning to those outworn methods which used to burden the humanities, I have not been unmindful of what is most certain to benefit our nation.

I hope, then, that you will accede to the proposal that pupils in secondary schools, from the sixth (lowest) to the third class inclusive, should complete four years of study common to all, their programme to comprise not only French, history, geography, one living foreign language, mathematics, natural sciences and drawing, but also Latin, and in the last two years of this period the elements of Greek.

Is not Latin the mother of our own language, its framework and its presiding genius? And should not Hellenic culture be able to enrich our humanism and impart to it some finer element? I have therefore made obligatory at least some elementary instruction in Greek, thus refusing to sanction the false idea that a child, before he has had any experience in the matter, can be declared incapable of receiving any intellectual benefit from this study. Is it not true also that the Graeco-Latin disciplines, above all others, are suited to youthful minds, provided that the teacher knows how to utilize their natural wealth of morality, eternal freshness and living beauty?

After leaving the third class (fourth year from the bottom), when their physical and mental development is sufficiently advanced for them to make a well-considered choice and when they have something more than a hearsay acquaintance with all the disciplines open to them, the pupils can elect either the classical or the modern-language course.

The classical course will continue to include Latin and Greek, the former as a required study, the later as an elective with certain inducements attached to it with a view to the encouragement of special efforts to acquire a full classical training.

The final years of the modern-language course, continued without Latin or Greek, but comprising a more developed study of French and the introduction of a second living foreign language, will no longer have a double purpose, as it has had since 1902. Based upon a solid foundation of classical training and then built on a broad acquaintance with French literature from the earliest times, enriched with the study of medieval and sixteenth-century French, which will now be philologically possible, and lastly filled out by familiarity with ancient and modern authors, this course will possess real pedagogical value and be an interesting and genuine experiment, one which has never been fairly tried. Thus we shall efface the bad impression which this course made when, under the Second Empire, practical instruction was incorporated with secondary studies and utilitarian ends were set up against the humanities, which at that time were considered dangerous in France because they favored the spirit of liberty.

An essential point was to establish an equilibrium between literary and scientific studies. They have too often been in conflict with one another, and now more than ever the times demand that they shall preserve a proper balance. I think I have supplied this by de-

ciding that from the sixth class (the lowest) to the first part of the baccalaureate examination the science programmes now developed shall be the same for all pupils.

In short, I found that I agreed with the Superior Council for Public Instruction that no choice between literary studies and sciences should be made until after the first part of the baccalaureate examination. In the opinion of the best judges and especially of the most highly qualified men of learning, they must cooperate equally in the formation of a soundly educated mind. This is why I have endeavored, in the new plan of studies, to equalize as well as to balance their respective shares. In the programmes of the second and first classes there will be instruction in physics and chemistry, which heretofore in the case of pupils in the literary courses were crowded into the "philosophy class," in a shape not well suited to minds which were not prepared for studies of this sort. The programmes in mathematics for the second and first classes will, moreover, offer an amplitude which was lacking in the instruction given under the law of 1902 to pupils in Sections A and B. The work was too elementary, in spite of the changes introduced in 1912.

As for the teaching of modern languages, nothing has been neglected that would preserve its importance and quality. Hereafter as heretofore, as I have had the honor of telling you already, the pupils will be allowed, on completing the fourth year's work, to choose a more extensive course in foreign languages and literature. Besides, a written composition and an oral test in the modern-language field will be exacted from all candidates at the second part of the baccalaureate examination. This innovation, in which I am particularly interested, shows my desire to strengthen a kind of instruction which it has been wrongly supposed that these new proposals tended to weaken.

In submitting to you a plan for the first six years of secondary instruction which sacrifices none of the essential means for developing young minds, I may say that I have secured a rational cohesion of school programmes, without which the system would lose its efficacy. But the uniform instruction imposed upon all cannot be made effective unless it is held together through some general oversight. This I have decided to provide by instituting an obligatory examination, which will comprise two written tests, one for Latin, the other for Greek, the papers to be chosen by the Minister of Public Instruction for the whole country. This arrangement will be necessary in order to prevent fraud, for the elementary classical certificate will be indispensable for all candidates for the baccalaureate. Coming at the end of the third class (fourth year from the bottom), this examination will be less of an interruption to the school life than the *brevets d'aptitude* (final certificates) of the advanced primary schools. The books will be corrected at the head office of the academic inspector. Pupils in private schools and those who have been taught at home will be allowed to take the examination on the same terms as public-school pupils and, be it noted especially, with absolute assurance of anonymity.

Special facilities will be provided for those few candidates of maturer age who may wish to come up for the baccalaureate without having ever attended school.

In all these various provisions I have taken into account the effect of time and development; thus I have no hesitation in instituting a uniform standard for the baccalaureate. Its chief advantage will be in permitting all candidates who have passed the first part of the examination to enter on an equal footing either the "philosophy class" or the "mathematics class," no matter what may have been their earlier elective choice. Having become furnished with a harmonious literary and scientific culture, they will make their final choice between letters and science, with full information and sufficient maturity, all the lines of professional specialization remaining open to them. The higher education, in all its various forms, will thus be open to young men capable of receiving from it all the intellectual benefits which it can give.

The fundamental arrangements which I have just explained involve a certain number of measures which I must now mention. For the first time secondary education will be connected with primary education in an organic and tangible way, in order to reduce to a minimum the difference of method which has sometimes caused a regrettable antagonism between them. The programmes of elementary primary instruction, of which the revision is now finished, will be adopted for the preparatory and elementary divisions of the secondary schools. This being the case, it will become possible to institute an absolute equality of entrance requirements in public secondary schools; and this I request you to do.

The necessity of having satisfied the standard requirements of the primary school in order to enter the secondary school (sixth and fifth classes) will be the first stage in co-ordinating the two schools, as well as the first effort in sifting out the pupils for secondary instruction. The further processes of selection will be so organized as to exclude from every class in the lycées and

colleges all boys who cannot furnish proof that they are fit to do the work required. The elementary classical certificate will be indispensable for admission to the second class, and this shall be without prejudice to the standard requirements in other subjects.

Finally, in a certain number of secondary schools, so-called special courses will be established. By means of these courses pupils from other kinds of secondary establishments, the advanced primary and the technical schools, who after making trial of them have regretted that they did not choose the secondary school course, may taken an entrance examination and be admitted to the fourth class.

Here comes in usefully a reform of the system of scholarships which will help in entering the lycées and colleges not only pupils who have come over from the advanced primary schools and the technical schools, but all those who, in spite of their ability, might have been kept away by want of pecuniary means. It is planned to employ for the secondary schools a system like that of the scholarship funds, which heretofore have been used only for pupils in the advanced primary and the technical schools. Measures of decentralization which have recently been taken for allocating these funds will make the new system easier and more equitable.

Thus merit will prevail over privilege; there will not be a single youth, no matter what his circumstances, who will not be able to secure admission to a lycée, provided that he can show intellectual capacity; and I venture to claim that, considering the present condition of public finance and our social organization, no better way of translating the democratic ideal into reality could be found.

Independently of these general measures which all converge towards the same end, there are various subordinate arrangements which will round out the new system. I shall call your attention only to the most important:

Shortening of the daily schedule of hours and of the annual programmes;

Unification of literary instruction, because the same master will teach French, Latin and Greek;

An addition to the programme in history in the "philosophy class" and "mathematics class" of a course on the political, administrative and judicial institutions of contemporary France, containing those elements which are indispensable for the education of a citizen;

Required instruction in literature in the "philosophy class," in order to relieve the difficulty which many pupils find who wish to

continue their literary studies after the second part of the baccalaureate examination.

It seems to me, finally, that the logic of the system will soon oblige us to adapt the regulations for the *licence ès lettres* in some definite way to the pedagogical preparation of future teachers. This part of their preparation needs to be strengthened.

As for the secondary education of girls, there is no theoretical reason for depriving it of the advantages of the new plan of studies. For some years now the humanities have been growing in favor in girls' secondary schools. We may look for an increasing harmony, with all the transitional steps which experience will point out.

To sum up: the new plan of studies seems to me favorable to a kind of education which, while suited to modern needs, sacrifices none of our traditions. There need be no apprehension, moreover, that this attempt to educate the choicest youth of France will diminish the enrolment in the lycées and colleges. On the contrary, the raising of the standard will encourage the able boys, whatever may be their origin, to seek those schools in which they will find the best employment for their talents. I am, furthermore, convinced that having followed, with a passion which honors them, the burning controversies attendant upon the elaboration of the new plan, the teachers will be zealous in putting it into operation and will apply in the service of those studies in which they themselves were educated the knowledge and devotion which they manifest every day.

If I were reproached with having closed the secondary schools to certain categories of students, I should reply that the question is to discover, in regard to studies, what the general welfare requires. Now, it requires, I think, that all children who are capable of receiving real culture should be admitted to the secondary schools, regardless of the social position of their families. And interest in the general welfare forbids our yielding to those prejudices which mask, in reality, a certain contempt for the advanced primary and the technical schools.

Promulgation of the decree which I have the honor to present to you will bring about the various reforms whose principles I have outlined. The new plan of studies will apply only to pupils who shall enter the sixth class on or after the first of October, 1923; thus their fellow pupils in the higher classes will continue to work under the old law.

I am convinced that after a war which greatly reduced the living strength of our country we were bound to take every step

necessary to educate, in the new generations, men who should be able to surmount, by their intellectual culture and their character, the difficulties from which our nation must issue greater than before.

If you approve of the terms of this decree, I shall be grateful to you for signing it.

I beg you, Mr. President, to accept the assurance of my most respectful devotion.

The Minister of Public Instruction and of the Fine Arts
LÉON BÉRARD

III. The President of the French Republic

In regard to the report of the Minister of Public Instruction and of Fine Arts,

Taking into account the law of February 27, 1880, Article 5, and the law of March 28, 1882,

And having heard the Superior Council of Public Instruction, issues the following Decree:

SECTION I.

ARTICLE 1. Secondary instruction comprises a course of study covering seven years. It follows a course of elementary primary study which was established by Article 1 of the law of March 28, 1882.

ARTICLE 2. All pupils follow the same course of study during the first four years.

Besides the other subjects required of all pupils alike, Latin is required during these first four years (sixth, fifth, fourth and third classes) and Greek during two years (fourth and third classes).

ARTICLE 3. In the second and first classes the pupils have a choice between classical and modern-language instruction.

On the classical side Latin is continued as a required study and Greek as an elective. Pupils who succeed in passing the examinations in advanced Greek will be rewarded with special advantages in their candidature for the baccalaureate and in being received for that degree, the terms of these advantages to be stated in the decree on the baccalaureate system. The hours set apart for Greek in the daily time-table are divided between French and the required modern foreign language in the case of those who do not continue Greek.

On the modern-language side Latin and Greek are replaced by

a more fully developed study of French and by a second modern foreign language.

ARTICLE 4. From the sixth class to the end of the first, the programmes and time-tables in science are the same for all pupils.

ARTICLE 5. The "philosophy class" and the "mathematics class" are open to pupils on passing out of the first class, no matter what their previous elective choice may have been.

ARTICLE 6. The requirements for the baccalaureate are the only standard for the secondary schools.

Every candidate, on applying for admission to the first part of the baccalaureate examination, must produce a certificate for the early uniform classical studies and show that he has passed a special examination, consisting merely of a written test in Latin and one in Greek, taken two years before the baccalaureate examination.

A ministerial decree will give further details in regard to this examination, which all pupils will be obliged to take under the same conditions of anonymity in the correcting of papers, and will decide also in regard to those exceptional cases in which this interval of two years may be reduced.

SECTION II.

ARTICLE 7. Public secondary education is open only to pupils who give evidence that they have received sufficient instruction to enable them to pursue the studies of the class they wish to enter.

A ministerial decree will determine for every class the terms of this evidence.

Pupils who have passed the first part of the studies covered by the certificate of primary studies will be acceptable for the sixth class, and those who have passed the second part will be acceptable for the fifth class.

ARTICLE 8. A ministerial decree will determine the time-tables and programmes for the public secondary schools.

ARTICLE 9. The present decree will be applicable, beginning on October 1, 1923, to pupils who shall enter the sixth class, except in what affects the terms of admission referred to in Article 7.

ARTICLE 10. Further decrees will determine the new system of scholarships in the secondary schools and also the ways and means for adapting the new plan of studies to the secondary education of girls.

ARTICLE 11. The decree of May 31, 1902, concerning the plan of secondary education is abrogated, except in so far as it affects

pupils who are at the present time pursuing secondary-school studies.

ARTICLE 12. To the Minister of Public Instruction and of the Fine Arts is committed the execution of this decree.

Done in Paris May 3, 1923

A. MILLERAND

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC:

The Minister of Public Instruction and of the Fine Arts,

LÉON BÉRARD

MSH 25157

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